

## **CONGRESSMAN BOUCHER ANNOUNCES FEDERAL FUNDING TO DEPLOY FIBER OPTIC BACKBONE IN BUCHANAN, DICKENSON, LEE, RUSSELL, TAZEWELL AND WISE COUNTIES**

***\$3 Million Federal Grant Will Enable the Establishment of High-Speed Internet Access to Much of the Coal Producing Region***

***Cumberland Plateau and LENOWISCO Fiber Optic Backbones Will be Extended and Linked***

**(Washington, D.C.)** - U.S. Representative Rick Boucher announced today that, at his urging, the U.S. Department of Commerce, through its Economic Development Administration, is providing a federal grant in the amount of \$3 million to the Coalfield Coalition, a non-profit organization comprised of the LENOWISCO and Cumberland Plateau Planning District Commissions.

**“The large provision of federal funding which I am announcing today will be used to link the Cumberland Plateau and LENOWISCO fiber optic backbones. By linking the two networks, high-speed broadband services will be established in communities in Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Tazewell and Wise Counties which currently do not have access to such services,”**  
Boucher said.

Using the \$3 million federal grant which is being announced today and a \$3 million matching grant which is being provided by the Virginia Tobacco Commission, Bristol Virginia Utilities (BVU) will deploy high-capacity optical fiber along 160 miles in Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Tazewell and Wise Counties.

The Cumberland Plateau fiber optic backbone will be extended into Buchanan County and new communities in Russell and Tazewell Counties. In Russell County, fiber will be installed along Alternate Route 58 from Hansonville to Castlewood. In Tazewell County, new fiber will be buried along Routes 19 and 460 from Claypool Hill to the Town of Bluefield. The backbone will also extend from the Town of Richlands, where it currently terminates, into Buchanan County through Vansant and the Town of Grundy by way of Route 460. From the intersection of Route 460 and Route 83, new fiber will be buried along Route 83 into Slate Creek to the Buchanan County Information Park and the University of Appalachia's School of Pharmacy.

LENOWISCO's fiber optic backbone will also be extended in Lee, Wise and Dickenson Counties. In Lee County, fiber optic cable will be buried along Route 58 from the Town of Jonesville to the Rose Hill community. In Wise County, the backbone will be installed from the Town of St. Paul to Coeburn along Alternate Route 58. From Coeburn, the fiber will be installed to the Lonesome Pine Regional Technology Park in Wise. The backbone's route will then follow U.S. Route 23 through the Town of Wise to the Town of Pound. From Pound, fiber will be buried along Route 83 into Dickenson County to the Town of Clintwood.

Boucher noted that the establishment of high-speed Internet and other broadband services is a vital step in attracting new jobs to Southwest Virginia. **"The establishment of the Cumberland Plateau fiber optic backbone which was completed earlier this year has already yielded tremendous economic success in Russell County with the announcement of approximately 700 new jobs in the Town of Lebanon. Extending and linking the Cumberland Plateau and LENOWISCO fiber optic backbones promises to provide even greater opportunities for new economic development and job creation throughout the coal-producing counties of our region,"** he said.

**"Approximately ten years ago, I began to encourage local governments throughout the Ninth District to find a means of deploying broadband networks so that affordable high-speed Internet access would be available to businesses and residents throughout our region. My goal in making this recommendation was to set our region apart in comparison to other rural areas of the nation, to make us more attractive than the typical rural region to industries looking to expand their operations into new locations, and to create technology-based jobs for Southwest Virginians. I am pleased that the federal government has agreed to my request and is making this large investment in deploying a fiber optic backbone throughout much of the coal-producing region of Southwest Virginia,"** Boucher concluded.